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# REV. MOSES MILLER

OF

HEATH, MASSACHUSETTS

ADDRESS IN COMMEMORATION  
OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF  
THE REV. MOSES MILLER, PAS-  
TOR FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH OF HEATH 1804-1840  
BY SPENCER MILLER JR. OF  
SOUTH ORANGE NEW JERSEY  
AT HEATH DAY CELEBRATION  
ON SEPTEMBER 1ST 1932

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# Rev. Moses Miller

## of Heath, Massachusetts

By SPENCER MILLER, JR.

N EARLY a hundred years have elapsed since the Rev. Moses Miller, affectionately known as Father Miller to the people of this mountaintop, brought to a close thirty-six years of faithful and loving service as pastor of the First Congregational Church of Heath.

Just eighty years have come and gone since he returned to this eminence after an absence of twelve years, at the age of seventy-six, to deliver an historical discourse in response to a cordial resolution of the congregation which set forth their "sentiments of high regard."

Three years later, in 1855, he died in the City of Chicago, and his remains were brought back to the cemetery on the top of this mountain which he loved so well, to rest alongside the dust of his father, mother, wife and four children. Since that time this is the first occasion that one of the Miller descendants has been privileged to speak to the descendants of those whom he delighted to serve as friend, pastor and teacher.

I count this a great privilege to say to the descendants of his par-

ishioners what those long years of pastoral service meant to him; what this mountaintop symbolized of strength and inspiration for his ministry; what the friendships made among the people of this valley did to enrich his life. He loved this mountaintop and this valley and its people, and if I judge aright by the many letters and testimonials, the people of this countryside reciprocated that love for their Mountain Shepherd.

Did he not say in that memorable discourse: "I have not found in any other place so happy a state of society as I have experienced here. I have felt it a great privilege that my lot was cast here; that I was called in the providence of God to labor in this field, and to train up my family on this quiet eminence away from the temptations and bustle of the more populous towns. . . . A praying, active, sound and united church is the best assistance a minister can enjoy. Other assistance is of little value. This privilege I think I have enjoyed in a good degree in my connection with this people."

From his former parishioners there are many letters and tributes



among which is this one from a younger member. "I feel a delicacy in addressing one far superior to me in years; yet the thought awakens a pleasing sensation in my very soul, when I call to mind the reverence and love I had for you in my childhood and youth, and still grown with my years and judgment; so I realize a greater respect than ever before."

Or consider, if you will, the words of welcome on this occasion by the Rev. Alpheus Graves, pastor of the First Church: "Standing as I now do in the position which you so long occupied as the pastor of this church and people, and entering into your labors—as I look back at the history of your ministry here, and learn its results and blessings of God upon your labors, I am impressed with the thought that it is a privileged ministry. Few pastors, in a field no more populous, have been permitted to reap such a harvest . . . I deem myself authorized here to assure you of the kind feelings and high regard still entertained for you in this community . . . that the people for whose welfare you labored so many years and to whom you devoted your best days still remember you with affection and esteem; and your memory will be embalmed in the hearts of their children."

And so I might continue, for the evidences of affectionate regard are many and generous. However, I am moved on this occasion to look back upon the record of the life and labors of Father Miller in Heath in a somewhat longer perspective. There is a certain appropriateness in such an historical view of his work on this Heath

Day. This year is the Bicentennial of the birth of George Washington, the Father of our Country. The Rev. Moses Miller was born in the year of the birth of this nation, four months after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. As he was wont to remark he was happy to have been born "a free man in the republic." From his birth to my presence here today is spanned practically the entire period of existence of the American Republic.

It was but nine years after the birth of the nation that Heath was organized as a civil community; within less than a month after the town was begun the First Congregational Church was organized. Four years later the first minister was called. Within less than fifteen years of the establishment of this church, Moses Miller came to preach for four Sabbaths as temporary pastor. He was a young man of distinguished presence, standing over six feet four inches, and of great physical vigor. He had been graduated from Brown University four years before and had just completed his theological studies while still a tutor at the university.

After his temporary occupation of the pulpit of First Congregational Church of Heath he set out for another church where he had an invitation to preach. While he was there a messenger journeyed one hundred and twenty miles from Heath with a call to him to return and settle in Heath. "The messenger was exceedingly urgent," wrote Father Miller in his autobiography, "representing that they were very urgent to have me do so, and that the opposition would never trouble. All things considered I could not





feel at rest in my mind not to return." Then, continuing, he adds, "Whether I acted from right motives or not, I can see the wisdom of God in this ordering of things. . . . I found the people more intelligent than I expected . . . the population generally were disposed to attend church and show respect to the minister . . . becoming acquainted with the people I could not with quiet conscience do otherwise than accept the call."

For thirty-six years he ministered to the people of this mountaintop. Here, too, he brought his young bride, Bethia Ware of Conway, four years after his settlement; here he made his home and brought up a family of nine children.

In estimating the life and character of this adopted son of Heath it will be helpful to turn back the pages of history and see something of the character traits of his forbears. Because of the extensive historical research of his grandson, who is my father, it is now possible to trace his ancestry back into the 16th century in England.

Joseph Miller, the great-great-grandfather of Rev. Moses Miller, sailed from Plymouth, England, as a lad of eighteen years in the sailing ship "Hopewell" and settled in Cambridge, Mass., in 1635.

Thomas Miller, the father of Joseph, and a resident of Bishop's Stortford, England, was graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge University, in 1584, and received the degree of Master of Arts at the same university in 1588.

By a coincidence, I was privileged to address a World Educational Conference, which was held in August, 1929, in the same university from which my forbear, Thomas Miller, M. A., was gradu-

ated nearly three hundred and sixty years ago.

Furthermore, it may be of interest to those who take pleasure in tracing hereditary traits, to observe that the head of the first three generations of Millers who go back to the year 1500 in Bishop's Stortford were wardens in the local parish of the Church of England, and that every known Miller ancestor of Rev. Moses Miller, save one, held office either as warden, deacon, elder or minister in the church, and every one of them, in turn, has taken an active interest in the cause of education.

The town of Bishop's Stortford, England, from which the Miller family came, has still another important connection with Heath. Dr. Joseph Emerson, who settled in this town in 1804 and served as its chief physician for thirty-six years, and the Rev. Emanuel Emerson, his brother, who settled in Heath as the pastor of the Congregational Church in 1840, were both sons of the Rev. John Emerson. John M. Emerson, the only son of Dr. Joseph Emerson, who was graduated from Amherst College in 1849, and his daughter Felicia, who married Chief Justice Welch of the Supreme Court of Ohio—also lived in Heath at one time.

All of these persons were descendants of Thomas Emerson (spelled Emmershone) of Bishop's Stortford and Elizabeth Bruester, who were married on "ye first day of July, 1611." These two, in turn, settled in Ipswich about 1639 and were also the ancestors of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Professor B. K. Emerson, the eminent geologist of Amherst College.

Among the more immediate forbears of the Rev. Moses Miller, was his grandfather, Deacon Samuel Miller, of Worcester, Mass., a man of wide interests and many



public services in that city. Of Deacon Miller, William Lincoln, the historian of Worcester wrote, "he was for many years the deacon of Old South Church in Worcester, held many civil offices in the town during the Revolution, was a man of firm patriotism, unusual soundness of judgment, strict integrity, and liberal benevolence."

Moses Miller, the father of the Rev. Moses Miller, was also a man of sterling character, but not of such distinguished accomplishment as either his father or son. It was from his mother, however, that Rev. Moses Miller obtained much of his inspiration. She was a member of the Gray family that gave to the world the noted Harvard botanist, Professor Asa Gray, the friend and contemporary of Charles Darwin.

Of such was the ancestry of the Rev. Moses Miller. It has been said that we are responsible for our actions but not for our ancestors; it is certainly true that Father Miller would have been the first to have given credit to his forbears for his heritage, as indeed he did in his autobiography which was written toward the close of his life.

It is very clear from any study of his life and labors at Heath that he owed a great deal to his ancestors for the many sided character of his personality. There is a story in my family that has been handed down from generation to generation of Father Miller's preaching for two hours on Sunday morning to his congregation on the state of their souls, and then in the afternoon lecturing for two hours on the state of the soil of the surrounding countryside.

I cannot attest its accuracy, but it may suggest a picture of Heath a century ago.

This is not the occasion for a full length portrait of Father

Miller, but you may permit me to call your attention again to something of the range of his interest in the life of Heath. Of his services as a mountain pastor I have already spoken in part.

It should be added that he grew up under the strong influence of Calvinism, and that when he came to his own ministry he felt the importance of exhibiting systematically the great doctrines of revealed religion. He also was active in promoting revivals in which some three hundred and seventy were added to the church—two hundred and fifty females and one hundred and twenty males.

The Great Revival, as it was called, occurred in 1822-23 during which one hundred and twenty-one were added to the church by profession. "This revival," wrote Father Miller, "not only increased the church in numbers, but in spirituality and strength. The general tone of religious feeling never before had been so high and so uniform as now. And this state of feeling continued without any great abatement for years." By 1832 the church had reached the acme of religious prosperity—a total of three hundred and sixteen members in all, which was larger than any other in Franklin County and probably in the state in proportion to population.

But the foundation of his church was laid in his Sabbath School. With his catechetical class for children and his week-day Bible instructions, he enrolled the whole congregation from the ages of four to ninety in the school which at that time numbered five hundred. "This, if I mistake it not," he wrote, "was the first instance in this state in which persons of all ages competent to receive religious instruction were in-





duced to become members of the Sabbath School." Have we not here the forerunner of adult religious education? The Sabbath School was in fact the largest at that period in the state.

"This school," he added, "through the activity of the superintendents and teachers, the general co-operation of the inhabitants and prayers of the church, was for a number of years an instrument of much good to this people. This county for a course of years seemed to live in a religious atmosphere, not as pure as heaven, but as devoid of unhealthy moral elements perhaps as we can expect till the inhabitants of earth shall experience a more thorough and general moral renovation."

Next to his chosen life work in the ministry perhaps no other activity so consumed Father Miller's interest as the cause of education. "The acquisition of knowledge is unlike mere excitement which exhausts, satiates and must in its very nature be periodical," he wrote. "One degree of progress here creates a keener relish for another degree; and every new truth discovered produces additional satisfaction. And we know it is by an enlightened conscience and a cultivated intellect that right affections are produced and sustained in the mind."

Among his earliest and in some respects most important educational achievements was in connection with the founding of Amherst College. Eleven years after his settlement at Heath, there was held in Shelburne, May 10, 1815, a meeting of the Franklin County Association of Ministers of which he was a member. They agreed unanimously that the town of Amherst was the most eligible place for locating a college to train men

for the Christian ministry, and decided upon it. They had taken the first associated action toward the consummation of that historic event!

Professor W. S. Tyler in his History of Amherst College, gives credit to this pioneering group of ministers for their activity. Says Tyler: "The first impulse and movement towards the establishment of a college at Amherst was not in Amherst nor even in Hampshire County, but in Franklin County, and that not at a meeting in a valley of the Connecticut, but among the mountains to the west of the valley where so many great and good men and measures have had their origin." Five years later the Rev. Moses Miller was made secretary at an organization meeting at the Amherst Academy where overseers of the fund to build Amherst College were elected. Upon the foundation of this academy the college was in fact established the following year (1821).

Nor did his interest in this college end with its establishment. A number of hundred dollars were subscribed from this church to the charity fund of Amherst College, and nearly all the lime for the first building was transported without recompense by individuals in Franklin County and a portion of it paid for. One room in this building was both furnished and finished by the ladies of this church. It is interesting also to note his interest in the higher education of women at this time. Under his leadership the people of Heath contributed no less than \$1,200 to the Mount Holyoke Seminary afterwards known as Mount Holyoke College, then under the brilliant leadership of Mary Lyon.

J. G. Holland, in his history of Western Massachusetts, says of



Heath: "About 1832, the town seems to have attained its highest prosperity. The population was about twelve hundred. The First Church numbered three hundred and sixteen members, with a Sabbath School numbering over five hundred members, and both the church and the school were the largest in the county. Select schools were sustained, which drew numbers of young men from neighboring towns . . . The town produced school teachers by the score. Besides supplying itself with teachers, it one year supplied forty teachers to the adjoining towns. For the highest prosperity of the town, for the encouragement of the cause of education, and for instilling life and ambition into the young, no man did so much as Rev. Moses Miller. Let his name be cherished and venerated! Since that day emigration has done its work in Heath, as it has in most of the mountain towns."

Pastor, Teacher, Civic Leader, Friend and Father—in all of these relationships there is something heroic about Rev. Moses Miller as

there was in his stature, which even a descendant may be pardoned for alluding to on this occasion. Here was a man! He and your forbears together wrought a fellowship upon this mountaintop which will continue to awaken our memories and arouse our enthusiasm. I can think of no happier spot upon which to keep such a memory green than here in Heath; it seems to be in the very air one breathes.

Near the end of his Historical Discourse to this people eighty years ago, Father Miller with almost prophetic power said to your forbears:

"Honor yourself and Heath will honor you.

And if you do not honor yourselves no place will reflect honor on you."

What finer valedictory of pastor to people, of age to youth, of generation to generation-

"Honor yourself and Heath will honor you!" What more completely adequate biography in seven words of him whom Heath delights to honor this day!

(Reprinted from The South Orange Record, May, 1933)





# DESCENDANTS of JOSEPH MILLER of NEWTON, MASS.

Miller	Thurgood	Avery	Metcalf	Fairbanks
READ DOWN	John Thurgood d. 1537 Hertford, Eng.	Robert Avery		Gilbert Fairbanks 1505-1577
1. John Miller d. 1554 Katharine	John Thurgood d. 1577 Manuden, Co. Essex	William Avery	Rev. Leon'd Metcalf Tatterford Norfolk Co., Eng.	John Fairbanks Isabel Stancliffe
2. John Miller d. 1584 Bishop's Stortford Eng.	= Joan Thurgood d. 1590	Robert Avery Joanne Wokingham, Eng.	Michael Metcalf 1590-1664 Sarah Elwyn	Jonathan Fairbanks d. 1668 Grace Lee
3. Thomas Miller M. A. Camb. Uni. d. 1627 Agnes —	Ware	Dr. William Avery 1624-1686 Margaret Allright	Michael Metcalf 1620-1654	= Mary Fairbanks b. 1622 m. 1644 d. 1676
4. Joseph Miller 1616-1697 Newton Mary Pope	Robert Ware d. 1699 Margaret Hunting	William Avery 1647-1708 Mary Lane	Jonathan Metcalf Hanna Kensie	
5. Samuel Miller 1678-1759 Elizabeth Child	Nathaniel Ware 1648-1724 Mary Wheelak	Capt. Wm. Avery 1678-1750 Esther Hunting	John Metcalf b. 1678 Bethia Sauels	
6. Samuel Miller 1718-1783 Elizabeth Hammond	Dea. Samuel Ware 1716-1806 Anna Goodale	Dea. William Avery 1716-1796	= Bethia Metcalf m. 1741	Howland of CONWAY, MASS.
7. Moses Miller 1745-1834 Sarah Gray	Dr. Samuel Ware 1746-1829	= Bethia Avery 1749-1843	Grace Avery 1756-1841	= John Howland b. Mar. 31, 1757
8. Rev. Moses Miller 1776-1855 Brown Uni 1800	= Bethia Ware 1780-1848		Wm. Avery Howland 1794-1878	= Hannah Morton m. 1819
9. Sam'l F. Miller 1822-1870 Amherst Col. 1848	= Charlotte Howe 1826-1863 Da. of Wm. and Almira (Lyon) Howe		George Howland July 30, 1824 of Chicago	
10. Dr. Spencer Miller Apr. 25, 1859 Worc. Poly T. 1879	Annie Miller b. July 15, 1852 d. Nov. 4, 1919	Walter H. Miller 1857-1929 Rowena P. Fobes b. 1860	Samuel F. Miller b. 1861 Marion Sleeper 1862-1932	Sidney W. Miller 1863-1910 Ida Ketz
Hattie M. Ruggles	Mary Miller b. Apr. 22, 1855 d. Sept. 11, 1855	Children	Phillip F. Miller 1890-1933 Marion Weber	Donald F. Miller Helene Tuttle
11. Marguerite Miller Pierre Grannis Peter E. Harriet Ann	Both buried in Waukegan, Ill.	Walter F. Miller 1882-1925	Sons	Son
11. Spencer Miller Jr. Am. Col. 1912 M. A. Col. Uni. '14		Charlotte Miller b. 1880 m. Arthur McDougal	Phillip F. b. Oct. 20, 1916	Donald b. May 20, 1926
Margaret M. Geer		Daughters	Arthur W. b. Feb. 29, 1920	
Ann Montague b. Oct. 12, 1930 Spencer III b. Dec. 14, 1932		Rowena, 1899 m. A. R. Urion		
11. Helen E. Miller b. 1897		Helen, 1901 m. J. McNamara		
Aurelio Glorni b. 1893		Charlotte, 1903 m. M. E. Quincy		
Elena L., 1921 Yolanda E., 1924 Aurelia, 1927				

See Avery, Metcalf, Howland, Fairbanks and Ware Genealogies.













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